AGNIA BARTO

THE BAD LITTLE BEAR-CUB

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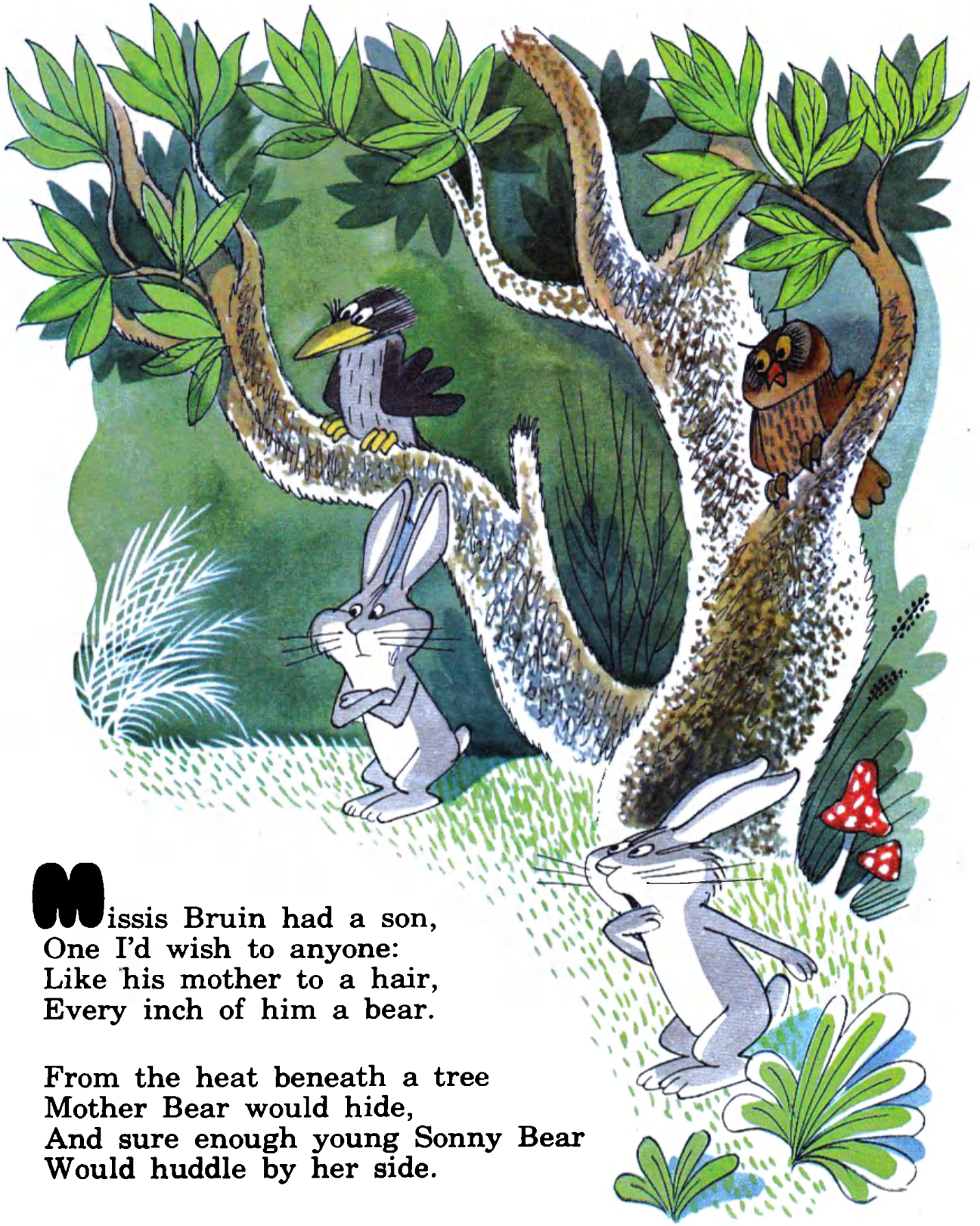

Missis Bruin had a son,
One I'd wish to anyone:
Like his mother to a hair,
Every inch of him a bear.

From the heat beneath a tree
Mother Bear would hide,
And sure enough young Sonny Bear
Would huddle by her side.

He'd trip up on a root, he would.
"Poor dear," crooned Mother Bear.
Indeed, my friends,
in all the wood
No finer cub was there.

Yet Missis Bruin's sonny
Broke all the rules and laws.
One day he found some honey
And ate with dirty paws!

His mother scolded:
"Naughty brat,
You mustn't grab
your food like that!"
But Master Bear just gobbled on,
And choked,
And coughed,
And spat.

His face became all clammy,
His fur began to stick—
A good day's work for Mammy
To clean, and smooth, and lick.

When Mum and Dad
sat down to chat,
He'd start a noisy squawking.
Now, should a cub behave like that
When grown-up bears are talking?

The bear-cub, coming home one day,
Climbed first into the lair,
And that instead of giving way
To another, older bear.

The other day he stayed away
Till dark, the dreadful lad,
And came with fur all full of hay,
A sight to make one mad.

He said without a trace of shame:
"We had a lovely, lovely game."
Says Ma: "His manners
made me weep.
He roars all night,
won't let us sleep."

He'll drive his mother crazy.
It's far too much to bear.
They went to see Aunt Maisie—
The same old story there:

He bit his Auntie in the knee
And shoved his cousins
off a tree.

All that week his mother fretted
And her pampering regretted.
"Oh, dear me,
I've spoiled the child:
Now he's simply running wild!"

She went and asked her husband,
(As if he really knew!)
"Our son is getting worse and worse.
Please tell me what to do.

"He doesn't know what's right or wrong.
He's robbing birds' nests all along.
He's always making faces,
He fights in public places!"

Bruin answered with a roar,
"Why am I to blame?
What *is* a bear-cub's mother for
If *she* can't make him tame?

"The rascal's got a mother,
And she's the one to bother."

But soon the culprit got so bad—
He raised his paw against his Dad.
Just think of it—a cub should dare
To snap and snarl at Father Bear!

The father with an angry grunt
Picked up a hefty stick.
(It seemed his offspring's latest stunt
Had cut him to the quick!)

Here Mother started whimpering:
"Oh, I can't bear the sight!
Why, it's an outrage, honestly,
Thrashing such a mite!"

Agnia Barto

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